

VZCZCXYZ0000
OO RUEHWEB

DE RUEHB #0215 0551310
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 241310Z FEB 10
FM AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0053
INFO RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEFDHN/DIA DH WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L BRUSSELS 000215

SIPDIS

STATE PASS EUR/WE MAUREEN CORMACK AND ROBERT MARCUS,
EUR/RPM RAPHAEL CARLAND AND AARON COPE, AND SCA/A ANTHONY
RUSH

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/22/2019

TAGS: PREL PGOV MARR EAID AF BE

SUBJECT: BELGIUM:ENCOURAGING ISAF CONTRIBUTIONS FOR ANF
TRAINERS

REF: STATE 14366

Classified By: Acting DCM Andrea Nelson for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

¶1. (C) On February 19, Acting PolEconCouns delivered reftel talking points, requesting more trainers for the Afghan security forces from Belgium and other ISAF countries, to Gilles De Kerchove at the MFA. De Kerchove confirmed that NATO's request for 22 trainers from Belgium and more general assistance with OMLT's and POMLTs, caveats and NTM-A trainers has been received from SACEUR, as also confirmed by sources in the Ministry of Defense. Defense Minister De Crem has had two meetings with NATO SecGen Rasmussen where the request was discussed. De Kerchove said that the primary hurdles to trainers or other troops is political. He expected a debate very soon in the Council of Ministers over the NATO request, which the MOD is now studying and for which it is preparing a proposal to the Council. De Kerchove believes the debate, both on trainers and on the broader issue of Belgium's participation in ISAF, will turn on issues of how effective the military and civilian effort in Afghanistan is and the outlook for Afghanistan's future. According to De Kerchove, the more conservative MR (francophone liberal) and CD&V (Flemish Christian Democrat) parties in the government will more than likely support the NATO request. De Kerchove said he is unsure about the positions of other coalition members, the Flemish Open VLD (liberal) and the CdH (francophone "humanist"/Christian Democrat). De Kerchove sees the head of the CdH, Minister for Employment and Equal Opportunity Joelle Milquet, as likely opposed.

¶2. (C) De Kerchove said he saw the Ambassador's recent efforts at opening a public debate on doing more for Afghanistan as a good thing, since the government would not easily bring it onto its agenda otherwise. He added that Minister of Foreign Affairs Vanackere said in December that Belgium favors a continuation of the effort in Afghanistan, albeit with a more pronounced accent on training. The Ministry of Development Cooperation is receiving proposals for how to spend the 12 million euros it has budgeted for humanitarian and development assistance for Afghanistan, but De Kerchove has not heard of any move to increase the Ministry's budget for the country, which is now less than 1% of its overall budget for assistance. He said that the two police and one magistrate selected for service in Afghanistan will complete their training by May 7 and be ready to deploy by June. He expects that these trainers will be sending in their "lessons learned" by the fall, which could help to encourage the GOB to send more. He expects the reports will highlight the pressing need for police training.

¶3. (C) In the course of the conversation, De Kerchove

observed that the United States and President Obama may be more effective advocates for doing more in Afghanistan among NATO allies than NATO SecGen Rasmussen. Rasmussen is seen as imperious based on his former status as a prime minister, as ignoring the North Atlantic Council, failing to listen to the NATO Allies' opinions, and failing to deal with financial problems in the organization. He said that Belgian defense attaches in Washington are hearing similar concerns from the USG.

GUTMAN

.